



*M^{rs} Branch and her Daughter rubbing the Girl's Posteriors
with Salt after beating her*



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with Salt after beating her*

THE *a. 5566.*
CRUEL MISTRESS;

Being, The GENUINE

TRIAL

O F

ELIZABETH BRANCH,

AND

Her own DAUGHTER;

FOR THE

Murder of *Jane Buttersworth,*

Their Servant Maid :

Who were executed on *Saturday, May 3. 1746.*
at *Iwelchester* in the County of *Somerſet.*

Together with

An Account of their Lives, and the many Cruelties
they were guilty of, particularly that of making
their own Servant Boy eat his own Excrement.
Their Behaviour whilſt under Sentence of Death,
and their Laſt Dying Speeches, made at the Place
of Execution.

L O N D O N :

Printed for C. SIMPSON, at *Danvers's Head* in the
Old Baily, and Sold by the Bookſellers of Town
and Country. 1746.

(Price Six-Pence.)

THE
LADY'S MISTRESS;

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THE
T R I A L
O F

Mrs. *ELIZABETH BRANCH*,
And Her Daughter,

At the Affizes held at *Taunton*, on Saturday
March 31. 1740.



BEFORE the Honourable JUDGE
CHAPPLE, one of His Majesty's Ju-
stices of the Court of King's Bench, and
several others of his Majesty's Justices,
for the County of *Somerset*.

Council for the Prisoners. My Lord, I am Council
for the Prisoners at the Bar, and this, my Lord, is,
if I am rightly inform'd, a malicious Prosecution,
and therefore we humbly hope your Lordship will
put off this Trial till the next Affizes.

Court. Prisoners, for what Reason do you desire
your Trial to be put off?

Prisoners. My Lord, we shall be better prepared
for our Trial by that Time.

Court. When was this Murder committed?

Clerk. On the Fourth of *November* last.

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Court. And when were the Prisoners apprehended, and sent to Gaol?

Prosecutor. My Lord, they were taken into Custody within six Days after.

Judge. You have had sufficient Time to prepare for your Trial, almost five Months, the Court will proceed.

Court. Arraign the Prisoners.

Clerk. *Elizabeth Branch*, hold up thy Hand. *Mary Branch*, hold up thy Hand.

Elizabeth Branch. You stand indicted by the Name of *Elizabeth Branch*, late of *Hemmington* in this County, for that you, not having the Fear of God before your Eyes, &c. on the 4th of *November* in the 13th Year of the Reign of our Sovereign Lord *GEORGE* the Second, by the Grace of God, King of *Great Britain*, *France* and *Ireland*, Defender of the Faith, &c. with Force and Arms, at *Hemmington* aforesaid, in the County aforesaid, in and upon *Jane Buttersworth*, in the Peace of God, and our said Lord the King. then, and there being, feloniously, wilfully, and of Mallice aforethought did make an Assault, and her the said *Jane Buttersworth*, with certain Twigs and Sticks, of the Value of one Penny, then and there held in your Right Hand, did feloniously, wilfully, and of Malice aforethought, in several parts of her Body, several mortal Wounds her gave, of which the said *Jane Buttersworth* instantly died. And so the Jurors for our Lord the King upon their Oath do say, that you the said *Elizabeth Branch*, the aforesaid, *Jane Buttersworth*, in the Manner and Form aforesaid, feloniously, wilfully, and of Malice aforethought, did kill and murder, against the peace of our said Lord the King, his Crown and Dignity.

Clerk. *Elizabeth Branch*, you stand a second Time indicted on the Coroner's Inquest, for that you on the 4th Day of *November* last, did feloniously and wilfully slay the aforesaid *Jane Buttersworth*.

Clerk.

and Mary Branch her own Daughter. 5

Clerk. Mary Branch, You stand indicted by the Name of *Mary Branch*, late of *Hemmington*, Spinster, for aiding, abetting, assisting and comforting the said *Elizabeth Branch*, the said *Jane Buttersworth* to kill and murder.

How say you, *Elizabeth Branch* are you guilty of this Felony and Murder of which you stand indicted, or not guilty?

Pris. Not guilty, my Lord.

Court. How will you be tried.

Pris. By God and my Country.

Clerk. God send you a good Deliverance.

Conrt. Sware the Jury.

Clerk. You good Men of the Hundred of *Taunton* summoned to appear here this Day draw near and answer to your Names.

Matthew Kent, Look upon the Prisoners at the Bar.

You shall well and truly try, the Cause between our Sovereign Lord the King, and the Prisoner at the Bar, who stand now upon their Deliverance, and a true Verdict give according to Evidence. So help you God.

Officer. Sworn.

Jurors Names.

<i>Matthew Kent</i> , Gent.	<i>Richard Charlton</i> ,
<i>Edward Symon</i> ,	<i>Timothy Harvey</i> ,
<i>Thomas Sutton</i> ,	<i>John Spencer</i> ,
<i>Luke Milbourn</i> ,	<i>Francis Pyke</i> ,
<i>Isaac Phipps</i> ,	<i>Mark Turner</i> ,
<i>James Boden</i> ,	<i>Joseph Gorden</i> .

Clerk *Officer*, count these : Gentlemen, answer to your Names. *Matthew Kent*, &c.

Matthew Kent. Here.

Officer. One, &c.

Clerk.

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Clerk. Gentlemen, are you all sworn?

Officer. Yes.

Council for the King. My Lord, and you Gsntlemen of the Jury, I am Council on the Side of the Prosecution, and, Gentlemen, the Prisoners at the Bar are indicted for an heinous Offence, for a Crime horrid, barbarous and cruel, the Murder of one of their own Servant Maids, of one, if I may credit my Instructions, always behaved herself faithfully and honestly and respectfully, during the Time she was in the Service of the Prisoners. I shudder, Gentlemen, even to think, much less to repeat, the barbarous Methods the Prisoners pursued in murdering the Deceased. I shall therefore leave it to the Evidence who will in the Course of the Trial tell you in what Manner the Prisoners perpetrated the horrid Act.

2d. Co. for the King. My Lord, and you Gentlemen of the Jury, Mrs. Branch, one of the unhappy Prisoners at the Bar, is the Widow of a Gentleman, worth 300 *l.* a Year, at Hemmington in the County of *Somerset*, and, Gentlemen, according to my Papers, the Prisoner, *Elizabeth Branch*, always shewed such a perverse Disposition, and behaved in such a Manner, that it is generally believed she in a great Measure hasten'd the Death of her Husband. Her repeated Cruelties and Barbarities, even in his Life Time, rendering him so very uneasy, that it is even now a Dispute in the Country whether his Life was shorten'd by any indirect Means, or whether his Heart was broke at seeing the daily, wicked enormous Proceeding of his Wife. Hence, Gentlemen it naturally follow'd, that no Servants would live with them long, though during the Life of Mr. Branch, they endeavour'd to bear with her ill Usage, because he was a good natur'd Man, and made them all the Amends in his Power. The Prisoner, Gentlemen, is of a morose Disposition, and used continually to thwart her Husband on very trifling Occasions, and in particular

lar if he expressed a Regard for any one Servant more than another, that Person was sure to be used remarkably ill ; insomuch that the Prisoner in a little Time after Marriage, and settling at *Hemington*, became the Talk of the whole Country round, and no one cared to live with her. Upon the Account of her ill and cruel Treatment of her Servants, after the Decease of her Husband, she was obliged to continue for a long Time without any Servant. But, Gentlemen, notwithstanding the Prisoner's Untowardness and ill Usage towards her Husband, she so artfully managed it, that she and her Daughter got Possession of all his Estate, which amounted in the Whole to near 300 *l. per Annum*. When the Prisoner was become Mistress of this Money, that Moroseness, Pride and Insolence she harbour'd in her Mind before, now became altogether intolerable. It was now, Gentlemen, that the Prisoner elate with Pride, imagin'd, that no Person was good enough to speak to her. It was now that she gave herself a greater Loose to Barbarity and Cruelty, imagining that Servants were Vassals and Slaves. Hence, the Prisoner was oblig'd to put up with unhappy Orphans, &c. from the Parish, on whom she exercised her cruel Temper, well-knowing they had no Body to complain to but Churchwardens, Overseers, and Committee-Men, who seldom listen to their Complaints. And, Gentlemen, it is too generally believed, that as the Prisoner hath gone on for some Years past, in this cruel Method of Procedure, she hath occasioned the Death of several poor Boys and Girls, who deserved a better Fate, but unlucky for them, that they fell under so severe a Mistress, as the Prisoner. But, Gentlemen, she not content with exercising whatever Cruelties and Barbarities she could imagine herself, brought up her Daughter to do the same. To such a Height of Wickedness and Barbarity did the Prisoners arise, that, as the Evidence for the King will inform you, and the several Circumstances of the Fact, they, on the 4th Day
of

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of *November* last, fell upon *Jane Buttersworth*, their Servant-Maid, and most inhumanly murder'd her.

3d Co. for the King. My Lord, and Gentlemen of the Jury, the Heinousness and Gbliquity of the Sin of Murder calls immediately to Heaven for Vengeance ; for it is observable, Gentlemen, and so it will appear by the Evidence we shall produce on Behalf of the King, that notwithstanding the Prisoners endeavoured to stifle the Murder of the Deceased by reporting that she died suddenly, and succeeded so far as to cause her to be buried privately, yet before three Days were pass'd, Providence, who will not suffer a Crime of so black a Die to go unpunished, regardless of the Almighty Decree, " Whoso sheddeth Man's Blood, by Man shall his Blood be shed, " stirred up a Stranger to the Deceased (for, Gentlemen, the Deceased had no Friends or Relations) to make Inquisition for her Blood. And having procur'd Leave took up the Body of the Deceased out of the Grave where she was buried, at the Charge of the Prisoners in the Church-yard belonging to the Parish of *Hem-mington*. Upon Examination of the Body it was found that the Deceased was murder'd, and the Coroner's Inquest having set on the Body brought in their Verdict, *Wilful Murder, by Persons unknown*. Soon after which, the Prisoners were suspected, apprehended, carried before a Justice, examined, and committed to Gaol. And, Gentlemen, let me tell you, That the Laws of *England* are as careful, and tenacious of the Life of the poorest Person as of the richest, and so just and impartial is his most Sacred Majesty our Sovereign Lord, and the worthy Magistrates of this Land, and the Judges thereof, that no one who offends the Law in this Point before us, if found guilty, can escape its Justice. O how happy and blessed is our State, where no Power, nor Money can screen the Guilty. Gentlemen, I blush to relate to you the horrid Circumstances of the Murder the Prisoners at the Bar have committed, the Manner of it, the Indecency,

cency, Cruelty, Barbarity and Inhumanity thereof, will better become the Evidence to relate, than me to repeat. Gentlemen, we shall call our Witnesſes and prove the Murder, and we doubt not but you will find the Priſoners guilty.

[Mrs. *Branch* being a Woman of Subſtance had retain'd of her Side, eight Counſellors, who ſpoke in the Behalf of her and her Daughter, as follows :

Council for the Priſoners. My Lord, with your Lordſhip's Leave, I beg, as I am Council in Behalf of the Priſoners to addreſs myſelf to your Lordſhip, and to you Gentlemen of the Jury. And, Gentlemen, the Priſoners at the Bar ſtand indicted for the Murder of *Anne Buttersworth*, their Servant Maid, in the Courſe of the Evidence that we ſhall call it will appear, that this is a malicious Proſecution, that we ſhall be honourably acquitted, and ſhall obtain a Copy of the Indictment.

2d Council. My Lord, and Gentlemen of the Jury, 'tis true, as has been obſerv'd, that the Priſoner, *Elizabeth Branch*, is a Gentlewoman of great Subſtance, to the Amount of 3 or 400 *l. per Annum*; a very great Eſtate in this Part of the Country for People in private Life. Gentlemen, the Council on the Side of the Proſecution have told you, that the Priſoner is the Widow of a Gentleman, who when alive lived at *Hemmington* in this County, but this is but a ſmall Miſtake, amongſt many others, that they have wilfully run into. The Priſoner, Gentlemen, was the Daughter of a Farmer, and married one *Branch*, a Farmer at *Hemmington*, and ſhe brought him a Fortune of 1000 *l.* and, Gentlemen, our Money was uſeful to him, was expended in manuring the Land, and through the great and notable Induſtry of the Priſoner, he got theſe great Riches: We ſhall be able to prove, that ſhe was far from being a cruel, barbarous Miſtreſs to her Servants; and, Gentlemen, if my In-

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ſtructions

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structions are right, we shall shew you, that this is a malicious Prosecution undertaken with no other Design than to extort a large Sum of Money from the Prisoners.

3d Co. That this is a malicious Prosecution, Gentlemen, will in some Measure appear even from what the Prosecutor's Council have advanc'd. They, in order to prejudice you Gentlemen of the Jury, even insinuate to you, that *Elizabeth Branch* was the Haster, if not the Murderer of her own Husband. When, Gentlemen, my Papers inform me, that the Prisoner and her Husband always liv'd together in the greatest Harmony for many Years till the Time of her Death, and so great a Respect had she for her deceased Husband that she has remain'd a Widow ever since. Nay, it is even a Contradiction to itself, to suppose, that a Man or a Woman should amass together so great an Estate as 3 or 400 l. a Year, and all that Time, as is insinuated, they should live at Variance one with another, that one should be kind and good-natur'd to Servants, and the other cruel and barbarous. In short, if the Prisoner, *Elizabeth Branch*, was, as the Prosecution insinuates, barbarous and cruel to her Servants, how would it have been possible for them to have carried on the Business of Farming. I will venture to affirm, that if it were the Case no one Servant in the whole County would ever have work'd with him, and then it must have followed, that they would not have been Masters of so large an Estate. That the Prisoner is now possessed of such an Estate, is to me a convincing Argument, not only of her Industry, Oeconomy, and good Management, but also a convincing Reason that her Servants liv'd with her a long Time, that they fared well, and were used kindly.

4th Co. My Lord, I beg Leave to observe to your Lordship, and to the Gentlemen of the Jury, that notwithstanding the mean Insinuations of some People, it is further plain, that the Prisoner and her Husband

Husband lived together amicably to the Day of his Death, for he by his last Will gave the Whole of his Estate to (as he expresses it) his loving Wife, &c. This, Gentlemen, is a potent Argument of her sincere Love, Duty and Affection for her deceased Husband; for had she been (as her Enemies represent her) it is past Dispute; nay, I think, it would have been unreasonable that he should have given her his whole Estate. On the other Hand, if I am rightly inform'd, Mrs. *Branch*, the Prisoner, was a dutiful industrious Wife, careful and thrifty, always studying to please her Husband, diligent in his Business, hospitable to the Poor, kind to honest Servants, and a Friend to Strangers; her Servants liv'd with her a great while at a Time, and those that left her Service were always glad to come again. Indeed, she hated an idle, roguish Servant, and used to reprove them sharply, and she would not suffer them to run gadding of their own Heads into bad Company, but obliged them to keep good Hours and to go to Church on a *Sunday*. And if the Court shall think proper we can call a Multitude of Witnesses, her Servants and others, to support this Character which she the Prisoner justly deserves.

5th Co. My Lord, I beg Leave to trouble your Lordship with two or three Observations to shew your Lordship and the Gentlemen of the Jury, the great Improbability there is, that the Prisoners at the Bar should be guilty of the Crime laid to their Charge. And first, Gentlemen, it may be observed, that the Prisoner was of a very charitable Disposition, and of very great Use and Service to the Parish of *Hemmington*. It was her Custom, and a good and laudable Custom it was too, for her to go to the Churchwardens, Overseers and Vestry of the Parish of *Hemmington*, and enquire for the Orphans of the Poor, and she would take them into her Service, cloath them when naked, feed them when starving, and when they were of Age, she would get them into Services or A-

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prenticeships, and so promote them in the World, if she found them industrious. And, my Lord, several of the Inhabitants of *Hemmington* are now in Court ready to testify the Truth hereof. What greater Act of Charity can there be in the World, than to cloath the Naked, to provide for the Fatherless, and to feed the Hungry: It is, in my humble Opinion, the Height of Christianity itself. Secondly, This Custom she follow'd for divers Years, and several Parishioners of *Hemmington* being asked, since this Accusation was brought against the Prisoner, Why they let so barbarous a Woman have their Orphans, replied, says my Brief, That no one of her Servants ever complain'd to them, but on the other Hand always gave the Prisoner the best of Characters. And, lastly, Gentlemen, can it be imagin'd, that the Prisoner should use her Servants she had of the Parish in so cruel a Manner as is represented to you, and they, at no Time, complain to the Officers of the Parish thereof? This is unreasonable to suppose.

6th Co. My Lord, and Gentlemen of the Jury, Life is precious, and ought not to be taken from the Prisoners upon slender Evidence. Reason, I think, teaches us, that the Prisoner could not be guilty of the Fact laid to her Charge. As for *Mary*, the second Prisoner, her own Daughter, she is indeed indicted for aiding and assisting her Mother, *Elizabeth Branch*, in the Murder of *Jane Buttersworth*, and this has as great an Appearance of a malicious Prosecution as any Thing in the World; for hereby the Prosecutor seems to intend to make sure Work, by depriving the Mother of the Evidence of her Daughter. Lord, to what a Height of Wickedness is the Age come! who can be safe and secure from the horrid IncurSIONS of Spite and Malice. Gentlemen, my Instructions tell me, that the Deceased had been sick for some Time, was subject to fainting Fits, and that she was bringing from the Well a Pail of Water upon her Head, and coming along, she fell down in one of these Fits, and,

though all Endeavours were used possible, by the Prisoners, to prevent her Death, yet she instantly died. Instances of this Sort are too frequent. This is the Truth, Gentlemen, the Deceased fell down, bruised herself with the Fall in several Parts of her Body, died, and was afterwards, at the Charge of the Prisoners, buried.

7th Co. Gentlemen, there remains now little for me to say, in Behalf of the Prisoners at the Bar. I shall only say, if they are guilty, I am surpriz'd, that my Instructions should be fill'd with the Names of a Number of Witnesses, giving both the Prisoners the best of Characters. Sure I am, Gentlemen, that if they, the Prisoners at the Bar, were the Occasion of the Death of the Deceased, it was by Accident only, and not of Malice premeditated or aforethought, and I humbly apprehend, that upon the Evidence this will be the Case, and then you Gentlemen will find them guilty of Manslaughter only.

8th Co. My Lord, and Gentlemen of the Jury, I beg your Patience a little longer. And Gentlemen it is my Opinion, that this is a malicious Prosecution, and as I give Credit to my Instructions the Story is this: *Jane Buttersworth* dying suddenly as you have heard, when *Anne Somers*, the Dairy Maid, who had told the Manner of the Deceased's Death to some of her Acquaintance, they presently put her upon charging her Mistresses with a Murder, by which she might get a Sum of Money from them; for, Gentlemen, it is observable, that the Girl died on the 4th of *November*, on the 6th was buried, and on the 8th was taken out of her Grave. After which, the Prisoners were apprehended, and committed to *Ivelcheſter* Gaol. So that, Gentlemen, here plainly appears a Contrivance, for why did not *Anne Somers*, before the Burial of the Deceased, discover the Murder, which she might then as easily have done, as she did afterwards. All the Circumstances of this Affair, Gentlemen, when they come to be laid before you, will plainly make it appear,

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pear, that this is a Combination of wicked and ill-natured People, to take away the Lives of the Innocent, purely because they would not have their Substance extorted from them, when they knew themselves not to be guilty. And indeed, Gentlemen, I do not find, by what the Council on the opposite Side say, that the Prisoners were observed to bear any Malice towards the Deceased, before the pretended Murder, and therefore, if upon the Evidence it should come out that they, or any one of them, accidentally, at the Time sworn did give her a Blow, of which the Deceased died, this will be Manslaughter, it will not be a premeditated Act, as the Indictment sets forth, and, if this be the Case, then you, Gentlemen, will bring in your Verdict, guilty of Manslaughter, but if you should be of Opinion, upon hearing the Evidence on both Sides, that the Prisoners were no Way accessary to the Death of the Deceased, then you will acquit them.

Council for the King. My Lord, and you Gentlemen of the Jury, the Council on the Side of the Prisoners have been very large and copious in their Reply to us of the Council on the Side of the Prosecution, and I could heartily wish, that every Word that they have said, was the Truth, and nothing but the Truth. Far be it from me to aggravate the Crime the unhappy Prisoners at the Bar have been guilty of. I could wish, and that heartily too, that the Justice of the Cause was of the Side of the Prisoners, for who can delight in shedding innocent Blood, but as I am persuaded, and so the Indictment sets forth, that this was not an accidental Murder, but a Murder committed with Deliberation, with Malice aforethought, feloniously and wilfully committed, wherefore I beg that your Lordship would indulge me in taking up so much of the Court's Time, whilst I briefly remark upon what the Council for the Prisoners have advanced. And, Gentlemen, it is not absolutely material,
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in the Case before us, whether the Prisoners have a good or a bad Character, but whether they be guilty of the Indictment, whether they, the Prisoners murdered the Deceased *Anne Buttersworth* in the Manner they are charged. One of the Prisoner's Council observes, that the Prisoner, *Elizabeth Branch*, was a charitable Woman, let it be allow'd, and yet she might, at this Time, deliberately kill the Deceased. The Truth and Circumstances of the Fact must come from the Evidences, and there we will rest the Point, only I would just observe, That the Prisoners Council putting it upon this Supposition, that they the Defendants if they were the Occasion of the Death of the Deceased, it was not designedly, maliciously or feloniously, but by Accident, by Chance, and without the least Premeditation, would insinuate that they are not guilty in the Words of the Indictment, but we shall call our Witnesses, and support the Charge of Wilful Murder against the unhappy Prisoners at the Bar, and it is not doubted but you will bring in your Verdict accordingly.

Council for the Prisoners. With your Lordship's Leave, and humble Submission to the Court, I beg Leave to say, that I have made it my Business to look into and consider the Nature and Circumstances of the Fact now before you, and according to my Instructions I find, That the Prisoners had sent the Deceased to some neighbouring Place for some Baum, where she had loiter'd some Time, and then returning with a Pail of Water upon her Head, and coming carelessly along fell down, upon which one of the Prisoners gave her a Box upon the Ear, and the Deceased falling into a Fit, she was put to Bed, blooded, but, notwithstanding all possible Care was taken of her by the Prisoners, the Fit was so strong that it deprived the Deceased of her Life. This, Gentlemen is what the Law calls Chance Medley, an Act not done designedly, without Premeditation, or Forethought.

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thought. And this, Gentlemen, is the Law, which was given to *Moses* by the Inspiration of God himself, and which, in Cases of Accidental Death, you ought to pay a particular Regard to.

Council for the King. Call *Anne Somers.*

Clerk. Put your right Hand upon the Book. The Evidence you shall give to the Court and the Jury shall be the Truth, the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth. So help you, God.

Officer. Kifs the Book.

Court. *Anne Somers*, tell the Court and the Jury what you know of the Murder of *Anne Butterworth*?

Anne Somers. My Lord, she was whipp'd to Death, and then buried.

Court. Tell the Jury how it happen'd that the Prisoners did it, and when it was done?

Somers. It was done on the Fourth Day of *November*.

Court. Of what *November*?

Somers. My Lord, I am sure, it was the *November* before last *Christmas*.

Court. Go on, and tell the Jury where you was that Day, and what happen'd.

Somers. I was at the Prisoners House at *Hemmington* near *Philips Norton*, that Day. I was then their Dairy Maid when the Murder was committed.

Court. How long had you then served the Prisoners as Dairy Maid?

Somers. About Four Months.

Juryman. Before you came to be Servant to the Prisoners, what Character did you hear of them?

Somers. That they kept a great Farm, and that they were worth a deal of Money, but nothing of their Cruelty and barbarous Usage towards their Servants till afterwards, for I was a Stranger to them, and they were Strangers to me.

Court.

Court. How long had the Deceased been with the Prisoner as a Servant.

Somers. I cannot tell. She was there before I came, But how long, I do not know.

Court. Tell the Jury if you can how this Murder happen'd.

Somers. My Lord, my Mistress, *Elizabeth Branch* call'd the Deceased *Ann Burtterfworth* and sent her to a Neighbouring Farm to get some Baum.

Court. Was it on the Day the Murder was committed that your Mistress, sent the Deceased for some Baum?

Somers. Yes my Lord,

Court. What Time of the Day was it?

Somers. It was after Dinner, and before Milking Time.

Court. What Time of the Day is Milking Time?

Somers. My Lord, it was dark Weather and short Days, and I believe it might be about 4 o'Clock in the Afternoon.

Court. And how long before that Time, which you call Milking Time, did the Prisoner send the Deceased of this Errand you speak of?

Somers. About one Hour and an Half.

Court. And how far might it be to the Place the Deceased was sent?

Somers. Half a Mile, or less?

Court. And was the Deceased gone an Hour and an Half?

Somers. No, my Lord, she was gone longer than she need to have been, but as near as I can guess, she was gone an Hour.

Court. Then she return'd about Half an Hour before Milking Time as you call it?

Somers. Yes my Lord, I am sure she did.

Court. And when she return'd, what happen'd then?

Somers. Why my old Mistress, ask'd her how she
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came to stay so long, calling her lazy Slut and the Deceased excusing herself with forging a Lie, my young Mistress was so exasperated, that she violently struck her with her Fist about the Head, and pinch'd her Ears.

Court. who is your old Mistress and who is your young Mistress.

Somers. Mrs. *Elizabeth Branch* and *Mary Branch*.

Court. Do you see them now ?

Somers. Yes, my Lord, they are the Prisoners at the Bar.

Court. What happen'd after this ?

Somers. My Lord, both the Prisoners jointly in a great Rage laid hold of the Deceased, and flung her upon her Face upon the Floor.

Court. Where was you at that Time ?

Somers. I was in the Hall between the Kitchen and the Parlour.

Court. And where were the Prisoner and the Deceased ?

Somers. In the Kitchen.

Court. And you was, you say, in the Hall, how could you see what was done in the Kitchen ?

Somers. The Deceased went through the Hall into the Kitchen, and at the Door of the Kitchen this happen'd.

Court. Whereabouts in the Hall was you, when you saw *Mary Branch* beat the Deceased about the Head, and pinch her Ears ?

Somers. I was sitting at the Kitchen Door, looking into the Kitchen. And when the Deceased was upon the Ground my young Mistress kneel'd upon her Neck, and then my old Mistress turn'd up, my Lord, the Deceased's Coats, and both of them whipp'd her with Twigs, for a long Time, and I saw her run with Blood.

Court. What Part of the Deceased did the Prisoners whip, till it run with Blood.

Somers.

and Mary Branch her own Daughter. 19

Somers. My Lord, the Prisoners whipp'd her till she run with Blood.

Court. I ask you what Part that was?

Somers. My Lord, it was the Deceased Breech, as they call it in *Somersetshire*, but in my Country, my Lord, we call it, Arse.

Court. Mind then, you say the Prisoner whipp'd the Breech or Arse of the Deceased till it run with Blood.

Somers. Yes, my Lord.

Court. Are you sure, that you saw the Blood?

Somers. Yes, my Lord, I saw it trickle down between her Thighs as she lay on the Floor. And then my young Mistress took off one of the Deceased's Shoes, and beat her about the Breech and Hips with the Heel thereof, still keeping the Deceased with her Knee on the Ground, and my old Mistress still kept whipping the Deceased.

Court. You say, your young Mistress took off the Deceased Shoe, and beat the Deceased with it?

Somers. Yes.

Court. So one beat her with the Shoe and the other with Twigs.

Court. And how did the Deceased behave under all this?

Somers. The Deceased begg'd for Mercy and after a great Struggling she got away, and ran to hide herself in the Parlour. But the Prisoners immediately followed her, when they had got Sticks, and beat her so about the Head and Shoulders, driving her from Place to Place, till the Deceased was quite mazed and not able to stand.

Court. How big were the Sticks the Prisoners beat the Deceased with.

Somers. My Lord, they were Broom Sticks.

Court. Did the Deceased fall down in the Parlour?

Somers. Yes, my Lord, she fell down, and then my young Mistress threw a Pail of Water on the Deceased to cool her, as she call'd it.

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Court. Did your young Mistress fetch the Pail of Water, from any distant Place, and then throw it on the Deceased.

Somers. No, my Lord, the Deceased was going to wash the Parlour, and the Deceased had brought it there for that Purpose ; but, my Lord, my young Mistress went into the Kitchen and fetched the salt Box, and turning up, my Lord, the Deceased's Coats she rubbed the Breech of the Deceased with Salt, which was bloody with Whipping. And then I went away.

Court. Where then did you go ?

Somers. My Lord Milking Time was come, and I went into the Yard to Milk my Cows.

Court. How long might you be gone ?

Somers. About Half an Hour, or somewhat more.

Court. What happen'd on your Return from milking ?

Somers. When I came into the Parlour, as I was used, to give my old Mistress an Account of the Quantity of Milk, I saw both my Mistresses sitting by the Fire, and the Deceased lying on the Floor. I observed that the bloody Cap the Deceased had on before I went a Milking was chang'd and a clean one put on, and that the Blood had run though that likewise.

Court. And when you saw what was done, did you take no Notice of it.

Somers. My Lord, I said to my old Mistress, that I believed the Girl was dead. Upon which she call'd me, Welch Bitch. Soon after this, the Deceased was put into a Bed, and I was order'd to lie with her, but I did not touch her, knowing her to be dead.

Court. Did not you use to lie with the Deceased on Nights ?

Somers. Yes, my Lord.

Court. Who carried the Deceased to Bed, you say she could not stand, and that she was dead.

Somers. I cannot tell, but I found the Deceased in the Bed, and I was not willing to go to Bed, to the Deceased

Deceased, because I knew she was dead, my Mistress order'd me to go to Bed to her, and I thought it was my best Way to obey her.

Court. After you came from Milking, did the Prisoners beat and abuse the Deceased?

Somers. No, my Lord, not as I know, I saw her dead, and afterwards she was buried, and it was given out that the Deceased died suddenly. Shortly after this the Neighbours muttered and the Deceased was taken up, and examined by Mr. *Salmon* a Surgeon.

Court. Prisoners, Will you ask this Witness any Questions?

1. *Prisoner.* My Lord, Whether the Witness ever saw me beat the Deceased before that Day?

Somers. No, my Lord, but I have often heard her complain of being beat and pinched by both the Prisoners.

Prisoners. Whether the Deceased did not bring in upon her Head, a Pail of Water instead of the Baum I sent her for, and whether as she was coming over the Cell of the Kitchen Door, with the Pail on her Head, she did not fall over the Cell of the Kitchen Door, and fell into a Fit, beat and bruised herself, and then died.

Somers. No, my Lord, she had no Pail of Water on her Head, nor did the Deceased fall down, but the Prisoners threw her down, and did to her as I said before.

1 *Prisoner.* Was not the Deceased subject to Fits.

Somers. I never heard she was, I never saw her in one.

2d. *Prisoner.* Whether she did not go out to Milking before Three o'Clock that Day?

Somers. As to the exact Time, whether it was before 3 o'Clock, or after it that I went out a Milking I took no Notice, but it was after Dinner my Lord, and before Milking Time, that I saw the Prisoners beat and pinch the Deceased and throw her upon the Ground,

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Ground, and the Prisoner held her Legs down while, the other Prisoner whipp'd her.

Juryman. *Anne Somers*, you say, that when you saw the Deceased lying on the Floor, you said to your Mistresses, that the Deceased was dead, and afterwards that she was put to Bed, and that you went to Bed to the Deceased, and that you did not touch her because you knew she was dead. Did you lie with her all that Night.

Somers. Yes, my Lord.

Court. Did you Sleep that Night. Did you hear the Deceased breath.

Somers. No, my Lord she, was dead quite.

Juryman. In the Morning when you got up why did not you go directly and declare what you had seen the Prisoner do to the Deceased the Night before, and that the Deceased was dead.

Somers. I was kept within Doors till the Deceased was buried, and not suffer'd to go abroad. I did not dare to speak lest the Prisoners should have used me in the like barbarous Manner. But as soon as it was possible I left their Service.

Court. How many Days did you stay with the Prisoner afterwards?

Somers. Not quite Three.

Juryman. In what Manner was the Deceased buried.

Somers. It being reported in the Neighbourhood, that the Deceased died suddenly several of the Neighbouring Servants and others were desirous of seeing her, before she was buried, but this was absolutely refused to all by the Prisoners, and the Deceased was buried in the dead of the Night. This caused a general muttering among the Neighbours, and hereupon the Body was taken up, and examined by Mr. Robert Salmon.

Court. Who took the Body up?

Somers. I cannot tell, some of the Neighbours,
who

who carried it to Mr. *Salmon*, and I saw the Body myself.

Court. Call *Robert Salmon*, Gent.

[Mr. *Salmon* appear'd and was sworn.]

Robert Salmon. My Lord, I attended with the Coroner's Jury, and examined the Body of the Deceased *Jane Butterworth*, and I found a violent Bruise in the Os Frontis, and both the Tables of her Skull were broken. I also saw a Wound a little above the Temple Bone, which it is my Opinion was very dangerous and another I saw in the Coronal Suture. I observ'd in the Regions of the Loins a dangerous Wound, and that the Fingers of one Hand and the Flesh beat off, and I plainly perceiv'd the Flexor Muscles and Tendons to be bare, the Anguish whereof, with the other Wounds, I judge to have been the Death of the Deceased. The Deceased's Arms, Thighs and Legs were greatly bruised, scarce any Part of the Body but the Breast and Belly were free; and in general the Body of the Deceased seemed to me to have been so barbarously and inhumanly used that it was enough to have killed the stoutest Man. I humbly apprehend, my Lord, that from these Wounds were a vast Effusion of Blood, because some of the Wounds were pale and of a Cherry Colour; for Wounds given in a plethorick State will be livid and blackish; wherefore it follows, that the Wounds must be given to the Deceased whilst the Deceased was living, and whilst the Blood was in its Circulation, for, my Lord, when that is ended no Blow or Bruise what ever will make any Alteration or Colour in the Flesh.

Court. Sir, it is then your Opinion, that the Body of the Deceased was barbarously and inhumanly used, and that that was the Occasion of her Death, as to who abused the Deceased I suppose, you do not know?

Salmon. No, my Lord, I do not know who killed the Deceased in the barbarous Manner I found her, nor can I say that the Prisoners are guilty herein. I
am

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am certain, that the Barbarity she receiv'd from Somebody was the Occasion of the Death of the Deceased according to the Laws of Nature and Physical Observation.

Juryman. Did no other Surgeon view the Body besides yourself?

Salmon. My Lord, I cannot tell; but as several People flock'd to see the Body of the Deceased there might be some Surgeons among the rest.

Council for the King. My Lord, if your Lordship thinks it needful we can call two or three Surgeons who are ready to depose to the same Effect with Mr. *Salmon*, but as the Coroner's Inquest have brought in their Verdict Wilful Murder by Persons unknown, we submit it to your Lordship whether we need trouble those Gentlemen, and take up the Time of your Lordship and the Jury.

Judge. There is no need to call any other Surgeon, one is enough.

[*Henry Butler* was called and sworn.]

Henry Butler. My Lord, I was sometime Servant to the Prisoner *Elizabeth Branch*, and I often saw Her and her Daughter beat the Deceased very cruelly and break her head upon slight Occasions.

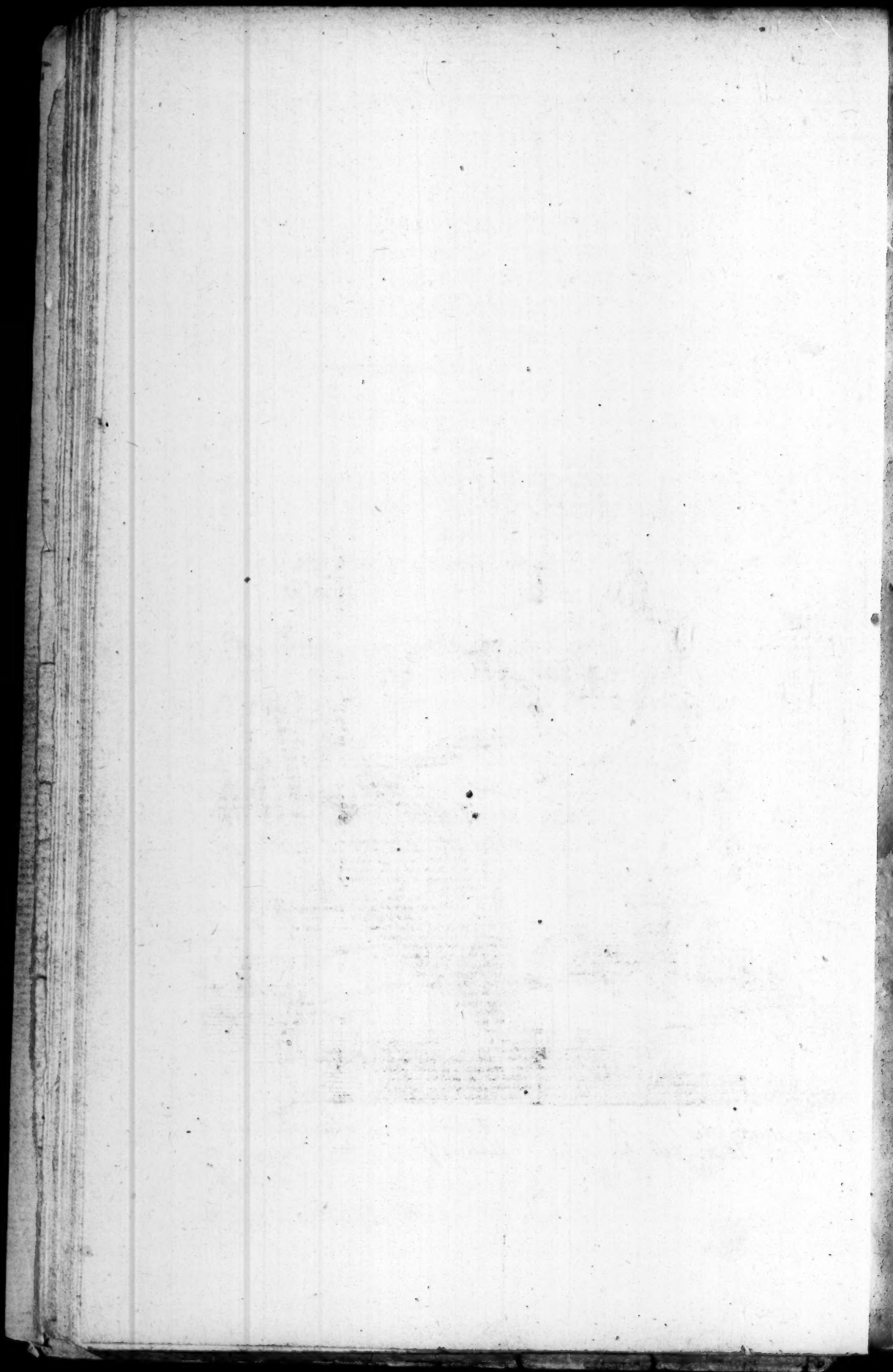
Court. And how did the Prisoners use You?

Butler. My Lord, the Prisoners often beat me barbarously. And before I went into their Service, I had heard that they did not use their Servants well, but Mrs. *Branch* came to my Father and Mother, and gave them Money, and agreed with them that I should come and live in the Prisoners Service, and promised that she would be very kind to them and me: And so I went thither, but I had not been at the Prisoner's House long before her Tone was alter'd; she and her Daughter would for every trivial Offence lay on me in the most barbarous Manner; and the Prisoners my Lord, very frequently would throw Plates, Knives and Forks at my Head, because (as I being a Country Boy) I could not wait at Table genteely

The Crueltys of M^r Branch & her Daughter.



*They make the Boy eat his own Excrement after having
beat Him till he bestrid Himself*



teely, or to please them. But once in particular, upon my letting fall a Plate at Dinner, the Prisoners, Mother and Daughter arose from the Table and beat me in such a Manner, that what with the Fright and Blows together my Lord, craving your Lordship's Pardon, I beshit myself, and then the Prisoners took up my Turd, thrust it into my Mouth, and made me eat it.

Court. Which of the Prisoners threw the Plates and Knives at You?

Butler. Both of them, my Lord.

Judge. Prisoners, Will you ask this Witness any Questions?

Prisoner. My Lord, Whether it was not a Lady who dined with me that Day that threw the Plates, &c. at him?

Butler. No my Lord, there were nobody at Table besides the Prisoners.

Prisoners. Whether he did not befoul himself, and put his Hand into his Breeches, pull some of his Excrement out, and fling it at me?

Butler. Indeed, my Lord, I was so affrighted, that I did not think of so doing. But my Lord, one of the Prisoners laid hold of me, while the other let down my Breeches, and my Lord, they took my Excrement, and one held me, and stood over me with a Rod, while the other cram'd the Excrement down my Throat.

First Prisoners Defence.

My Lord, The Deceased was a poor Girl, whom I took upon Charity, and when she first came into my Service she behaved very well, but at length she grew pert, would stay of an Errand, and tell Lies. This, my Lord, I used often to admonish her about, and sometimes, indeed, I would give her a Blow to make her remember, but they were but slight Ones. At this Time I sent the Deceased for some Baum, she staid a very long Time more than she need to have done, and when she return'd I said to her, *Jenny,*

D

where

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where is the Baum, what made you stay so long, I will give it you. She had then a Pail of Water on her Head, and with the Fright she fell down, and from that Fall proceeded those Wounds in the Head which Mr. *Salmon* has giving an Account of. Gentlemen, 'Tis true, there was no Body in the House at that Time, and so we cannot prove it, *Anne Somers* says she was there, but I did not see her till she return'd from Milking. The Deceased fell down in a Fright, fell into a Fit, and beat and bruised herself in such Manner as you have heard, for she was subject to Fits, and tho' I did all I could to prevent the Misfortune, by putting her to Bed, and the like, yet she soon died. Gentlemen, I am innocent of the Crime laid to my Charge; I did strike her indeed, but neither with Sticks nor Twigs, but I did it with my Hand, and if I did hurt her, it was not done designedly, but accidentally.

My Lord, the Wounds as she has in her Forehead have been given since the Deceased was taken out of her Grave, for she had no Signs of Blows or Bruises in her Forehead when she was put into her Coffin, and buried. Malicious People, my Lord, have since done it.

Second Prisoners Defence.

My Lord, I did indeed strike *Jane Butterfworth*, but it was very lightly, this is a malicious Prosecution, and set on Foot only to ruin us, the Girl was subject to Fits, and in one of those Fits she died.

Prisoners. We desire to ask *Anne Somers* some more Questions, and likewise to call some Persons to our Reputation.

Anne Somers, was called again.

Prisoners. Whether we ever did beat or pinch you?

Somers. My Lord, the Prisoners attempted to beat me several Times, but I got out of their Way, but one Time, they threw some Plates at me, but they did not hit me.

Prisoners.

Prisoners. How long was it that we threw the Plates at you, before the Deceased died ?

Somers. Not long.

Prisoners. And did not you then say, that you would be revenged on us for it ?

Somers. No, my Lord, I did not say a Word to the Prisoners for Fear I should be murder'd.

Abraham Hyson. My Lord, the Evidence *Somers* said to me, that if ever the Prisoners should beat and use her ill, she would be up with them.

Court. What did you mean *Somers* by those Words.

Somers. My Lord, that I would complain to a Justice.

Juryman. What Character might the Prisoners have ?

Hyson. A very good Character. I never heard of any Cruelties that the Prisoners were guilty of before this was brought against them. They always liv'd in great Reputation, paying every Person their own, and living neighbourly.

Court. How long have you known the Prisoners ?

Hyson. My Lord, Many Years, I knew Mr. *Branch* before he died a long Time.

Court. Were you intimate in the Family.

Hyson. My Lord, I used frequently to go thither, and I never heard that the Prisoners were cruel to their Servants.

Court. Do you live at *Hemmington* ?

Hyson. No, my Lord, about ten Miles off ?

Sarah Rogers. My Lord, about Ten Years ago, I liv'd with the Prisoners as their Servant, and, my Lord, they kept a good House, the Servants never wanted for Food, nor we never wanted for Work ; for the Prisoner would make us work. And the Prisoners never fell out with the industrious Servant, but the idle she could not endure. My Lord, I liv'd with her 2 Years, and my Mistress would now and then strike me lightly with her Hand back handed, but I

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do not desire a better Mistress, and my Lord I would not have gone away from her, but I married from thence.

Council for the King. Call *John Roberts*, and *Martha Sproson*.

John Roberts. My Lord, the Prisoners at the Bar have the worst of Characters for their ill Usage of their Servants, they are at *Hemmington* reported to be so?

Juryman. Do you know any particular Instance of their Barbarity to their Servants of your own Knowledge?

Roberts. No, only, that the Prisoners are generally reported to be cruel and barbarous to their Servants, and I know several who on that Account have refused serving them, or when they had been in the Prisoners Service a few Days took the first Opportunity they could to leave it.

Martha Sproson. My Lord, I lived sometime near to the Prisoners House, and I have often seen one or other of them beat their Servants, and I could very often hear them cry tho' I could not see them.

Judge. Gentlemen of the Jury, *Elizabeth Branch* the Mother, and *Mary Branch* her Daughter have been arraign'd for the Murder of *Anne Buttersworth* their Servant Maid, on the 4th Day of *November* last, at their House at *Hemmington* in this County. *Anne Somers*, the principal Evidence for the King, tells you, that she saw the Prisoner beat and pinch the Deceased and whip her with Twigs till she run with Blood, and that one of the Prisoners took off the Deceased's shoe, and beat the Deceased therewith about the Hips and Breech, that then she, *Mary Branch* did throw a Pail of Water on the Deceased as, she said, to Cool her, and afterwards fetch'd some Salt and Salted the Wounds therewith. The Evidence says, that *Mary Branch* and the Deceased were at that Time in the Parlour, and that they got Sticks, Broomsticks, and both fell on the Deceased in a cruel Manner, and that the Salt was fetch'd out of the Kitchen they salted the Breech of the Deceased

Deceased with. Gentlemen, she further tells you, that she went out a Milking, and that on her Return she found her two Mistresses sitting by the Fire in the Parlour, and the Deceased lying before the Fire, that she said to her old Mistress, The Girl was dead, that her Mistress called Welch Bitch, that she was put into a Bed, and that she (the Evidence) lay with her that Night, and that the Deceased, afterwards was privately buried, and it was given out that the Deceased died suddenly. Now Gent. this Evidence is partly positive as to the Fact, and partly circumstantial, and you will find, that tho' the Evidence did not see the Prisoner directly kill the Deceased yet on her Return she found the Deceased dead, and the Prisoners in their Defence say, their was no body in the House at that Time, it follows, that from the Circumstances of the Fact the Prisoners are guilty. Mr. *Salmon* the Surgeon who view'd and examin'd the Body of the Deceased says, that the Blows the Deceased receiv'd in her Forehead were given in the Deceased's Life Time, and he gives you a very good Reason for it, and tells you, that Wounds giving in a plethorick State will be livid and blackish; and that there must have been a vast Effusion of Blood, from the Appearance of some of the Wounds, being pale and of a Cherry Colour, that the Wounds must be given in Life, whilst the Blood was in its Circulation; for, says he, when that is ended no Blow or Bruise will make any Alteration or Colour in the Flesh. This Gentlemen is the Substance of the Evidence for the Prosecutor, and Gentlemen if you credit the Evidence *Somers* you will find the Prisoners guilty. The Prisoners indeed in their Defence, tell you, that the Deceased was sent by them the Prisoners to a neighbouring Place for some Baum, that the Deceased staid long of the Errand, and that she forg'd a Lie to excuse herself, that they said some harsh Words to her, that the Deceased having on her Head a Pail of Water fell over the Sill of the Door, bruised herself and falling
into

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into a Fit died suddenly. And then afterwards they contradict what they have said before, and tell you, that some malicious Persons had wounded the Deceased in the Forehead, when they took the Deceased's Body out of her Grave. But Gentlemen, what you are to have a particular Regard to in behalf of the Prisoners is that Part of the Prisoners Defence wherein they acknowledge that they did strike the Deceased and say, that if the Prisoners did hurt or were the Occasion of the Death of the Deceased it was not designedly, but accidentally. Now, Gentlemen if you shall be of Opinion that they the Prisoners accidentally killed or was the Occasion of the Death of the Deceased then you will bring in your Verdict Manslaughter only; but then Gentlemen you will at the same Time weigh and consider the several Circumstances of the Fact; for if it is a Manslaughter it was done hastily at one Blow only. For tho' the Prisoners might have no Design of killing the Deceased when they first attacked her; yet the Circumstances of the Fact shew, that they deliberately, with many Barbarities and Cruelties transacted time after time at length murder'd the Deceased. Gentlemen, if you credit the Evidence for the King, you will bring in your Verdict Guilty Death. But if you find that the Prisoner accidentally killed the Deceased then you will bring in your Verdict Manslaughter.

Officer. Make Way for the Jury.

[Jury having been out an Hour, return'd.]

Officer. Clear the Bar. Bring the Prisoners forward.

Clerk. Gentlemen of the Jury answer to your Names.

Matthew Kent, &c.

Matthew Kent. Here, &c.

Clerk. Who shall say for You?

Jury. Our Foreman.

Clerk. Look on the Prisoners at the Bar, How say you are they guilty of the Felony and Murder they stand indicted for or not Guilty.

Foreman.

and Mary Branch her own Daughter. 31

Foreman. Guilty.

Clerk. And so you all say?

Jury. Yes.

Gaoler. Take Care of them.

The last Day of the Assizes the Prisoners were brought to the Bar.

Court. Prisoners, what have you to say, why Sentence of Death should not be pass'd upon you, according to Law.

Prisoners. We cannot say any thing more than what we have said.

Judge. You, the Prisoners at the Bar, *Elizabeth Branch* and *Mary Branch*, have been indicted for a barbarous, cruel and horrid Murder, committed by you on *Jane Buttersworth*, your Servant Maid, on the one Part, and after a fair and impartial Trial on the other, your Country have found you guilty of the Charge. I would therefore have you make a proper Use of that short Time which the Law allows you for making your Peace with God, whom you have so highly offended. I have nothing more to say than to pronounce that dreadful Sentence which the Law requires and commands me to do; which is,

That you be convey'd from this Place to that from whence you came, and from thence to the Place of Execution, and there be hang'd by your Necks until you are dead!-----And the Lord have Mercy on your Souls.

Gaoler. Take the Prisoners away.

A brief Account of the Lives of Mrs. Branch and her Daughter, and the many Cruelties they were guilty of.

MRS. *Branch* (according to the best Accounts I could learn of her) was the youngest Daughter of a Gentleman of small Fortune at *Philips Norton* in the County of *Somerſet*. She was born in 1687, and what

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what surpriz'd the Whole Family was, that she had a Tooth in her Head, which, indeed, as most Authors agree, denotes the Person so born, to be of a fierce, barbarous and cruel Disposition. And this Disposition made an early Appearance in Mrs. *Branch* when young, for contrary to the natural Inclination of her Sex, she used to catch Flies and kill them, and it was observable in the Family that she lov'd to torment Dogs and Cats, and to kill them. As she grew up, this Temper grew more prevalent in her, and then it was visible, that she delighted in imposing Punishments upon her Playfellows, whenever she could, and when arriv'd to Woman's Estate, she would take great Delight in tormenting her Father's Servants. At this Time of Life, her Parents and Friends, who had all along observ'd her Disposition to Ferocity, and had frequently admonish'd her of it, told her, that this Temper in her would never recommend her to a Husband. She, taking this into Consideration, and thinking, that when she should come to be a Mistress of a Family, she could gratify this predominant Passion of her Soul, thought fit to suspend or stifle it for the present. And accordingly, Mr. *Branch* became her Admirer, who being a Farmer at *Hemington*, was admitted her Suitor, and in a short Time they were married. A Month was scarce pass'd before she began to display her natural cruel Temper; for she would on the most trivial Occasion beat her Servants, keep them whole Days without Victuals in Order to punish them, and at other Times she would beat them unmercifully, and turn them out of Doors late in the coldest Nights in Winter, without paying them their Wages. Thus she proceeded, and the Reason why her Barbarities to her Servants had not expos'd her to publick Censure and Punishment was, that Mr. *Branch* (who was a good-natur'd Man) us'd to pay the Servants so discharg'd unknown to her, and make them what Amends lay in his Power for the Injuries his Wife did to them. But at length, it pleas'd

fed God, Mr. *Branch* died, and left his Wife and Daughter his whole Estate, amounting to near 300 l. a Year. It was then that all Mrs. *Branch's* Servants left her, and she was oblig'd to take up with Strangers, Strollers in the Country, or any poor Person's Child she could light of, for she was so infamous for her Cruelties and Barbarities to her Servants that no one car'd to live with her, that knew, or had heard of her. Not content with being cruel herself, she train'd her Daughter up in the same Disposition, till it became a Custom with them to fling Knives, Plates, Forks, &c. at the Heads of their Servants on the most trifling Occasions: An Instance whereof, among many others too tedious to name, is their barbarous Usage of *Henry Butler*, who it seems, whilst waiting at Table, accidentally let fall a Plate, upon which Mrs. *Branch* and her Daughter, threw Knives and Plates at him, and afterwards fell upon him violently, and beat him, insomuch that with the Fright the Boy bespilt himself, which his Mistresses perceiving, they unbutton'd his Breeches, and, having took his Excrement into their Hands, cramm'd it down his Throat, and forc'd him to eat it. This Barbarity is a shocking one, and one would have thought such an one as even Modesty and common Decency would have refrain'd them from. But Vice is a Precipice wherein the Persons engag'd run headlong to Destruction; they did not stop here, but, on a slight Provocation they kill'd *Jane Buttersworth*, in the cruel and barbarous Manner related in the foregoing Trial. For this Fact, both Mother and Daughter were apprehended, examined, and committed to *Iwelchester* Gaol, and on *Saturday, March 31.* was brought from thence under a strong Guard, to *Taunton*, and at the Assizes held there for the County of *Somerset*, before the Honourable Judge *CHAPPLE*, was tried, found guilty, and receiv'd Sentence of Death.

Their Behaviour whilst under Sentence of Death.

Mrs. *Branch* and her Daughter entertain'd great Hopes that they should be pardon'd. They made Application to the Judge, who, taking into Consideration, that Mrs. *Branch* might have some temporal Affairs to settle, order'd the Execution to be on the Third of *May*, which was five Weeks after their Trial. Mrs. *Branch* and her Daughter made Applications to several Persons in Order to obtain his Majesty's Pardon, but this was altogether in vain; for every one detested being concern'd in endeavouring to screen them from the Punishment they so justly deserv'd. Several Persons visited them, whilst under Sentence of Death. And it was remarkable, that Mrs. *Branch* seem'd little concern'd under her Misfortunes; but her Daughter griev'd very much, and desir'd every Body that came near her to sue for Mercy for her. The Evening before they died, they had a Sermon preach'd to them by a learned and reverend Divine, from these Words: *Thou shalt do no Murder*. Wherein he laid before them the Heinousness of Murder, how injurious and destructive it was to Society, and how offensive it was to the Almighty Creator. He earnestly exhorted them to repent of all their Sins, and to put their sole Trust in Christ the Mediator between God and Man, and to have a lively Faith in him, that so their Sins, which now were as red as Scarlet might be as white as Snow, and though as Crimson might become as Wool.

It was now, that Mrs. *Branch* first began to think seriously of her latter End, and therefore both she and her Daughter confess'd their Sins, and receiv'd the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

The People in general cried vehemently against Mrs. *Branch*, and when she was brought to her Trial, the whole Country all around rose, so that the Sheriffs Officers were oblig'd to convey them back to

Ivelchester,

Ivelcheſter, after they had receiv'd Sentence of Death, under a very ſtrong Guard in the Dead of the Night, for Fear left the People ſhould ſeize the Priſoners and tear them to Pieces. The ſame Day, the High Sheriff ſeiz'd their Eſtate forfeited for the Service of the Crown.

Their Behaviour and Laſt Dying Speeches at the Place of Execution.

ON *Saturday*, the Third of *May* laſt, in the Morning between Three and Four o'Clock, Mrs *Branch* and her Daughter, attended by the Gaoler and about half a Dozen Perſons, walk'd from *Ivelcheſter* to the Place of Execution; but when they came there the Gallows was cut down, whereupon a Carpenter was immediately ſent for, who erected another, and they were both executed before Six o'Clock, to the great Diſappointment of ſeveral Thouſands of People, that came far and near on purpoſe to ſee a publick Example made of two Wretches that ſo much deſerv'd it.

At the Place of Execution they join'd with the Miniſter in Prayer, and ſeem'd, particularly the Daughter, to be very devout. Before Mrs. *Branch* was turn'd off ſhe begg'd of the Sheriff, that ſhe might ſpeak to the People. Which was granted, a true Copy whereof follows:

Good People,

YOU who are Maſters and Miſtreſſes of Families, to you I ſpeak in a more eſpecial Manner. Let me advice you to take Care, that you never harbour Cruel, baſe and mean Thoughts of your Servants, as that they are your Slaves and Drudges, and that any Sort of Uſage be it never ſo bad, is good enough for them. Theſe and ſuch like were the Thoughts that led me to uſe my Servants as Slaves, Vagabonds and Thieves; it was theſe that made me ſpurn at, and deſpiſe them, and led me on from one Degree of Cruelty.

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Cruelty to another. Keep your Passion in due Bounds, let them not get the Mastery over you, lest they bring you to this ignoble End. I am justly punished for all my severities, and 'tis true, I did strike my Maid, but it was not with a Design to deprive her of Life, and so far I think my Sentence now about to be executed on me is unjust; but the Lord forgive my Prosecutors, and all those who have maliciously and falsely swore against me. Another Caution I would give You Parents is, That you take Care to suppress in your Children the first Appearance of Cruelty and Barbarity. Nothing grieves me so much, under this dreadful Shock, as that I have by my Example and by my Command made my own Daughter guilty with me of the same Follies, Cruelties and Barbarities, and thereby have involv'd her in the same Punishment and Ruin, with myself. I declare that I had no Design of killing the Deceased, as the Lord is my Judge, and before whom I must shortly appear. I beg of you to pray for me unto God, that my Sins may be forgiven me, and that I may be receiv'd into Mercy.

The Daughter then added, Good People, Pity my unhappy Case, who young was train'd up in the Paths of Cruelty and Barbarity, and take Warning by my unhappy End, to avoid the like Crimes. You see I am here cut off in the Prime of Life, in the Midst of my Days. Good People, pray for me, pray for me.

Then the Mother went up the Ladder first, and the Daughter afterwards.

All the Country were greatly incens'd against these inhuman Murderers, and in all Probability the Populace would have pull'd them in Pieces, had they not been executed so early in the Morning.

F I N I S.